

# FAMILY ISSUES

## Communication

Communication with each other can sometimes be a difficult process. The information we try to give to one another is often not received as it was sent. Sometimes the listener hears a meaning within the message that the sender didn't intend. For example, the statement "I can't believe you didn't get that job!" can be taken as;

- a. He believes I should have been able to get the job, I didn't so I'm dumb, or
- b. He believes I was good for the job and can't believe they didn't hire me.

How a message is taken depends on many things.

- 1. How it was given: Was the sender's voice angry? Loud? Excited? Disappointed? Was the message in writing? The message changes greatly when any of these methods are used.
- 2. The relationship between the sender and the receiver: Dad to Child, Teacher to Student, Child to Child, Black to White etc. The relationship between people can change a message just because it was said by that person.
- 3. In addition, it is important to know who the person is who received the message to know how it was received. If the receiver is sad, or angry the message may be received negatively. If the receiver has poor self esteem he might even take a message that was meant to be positive as a deliberate attack on his self worth.

Communication with children is even trickier and more important to get it right. You see, as adults, we carry a lot of authority over kids. Because of this "authority" kids automatically believe everything we say.

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## Communication Skills

Knowing how to talk to a child is very important. Many parents just yell at kids. They come into the house and see that the child has left his toys all over the living room, though he/she has been told to put them away, they start yelling.

“How many times have I told you to put your toys away, don’t you listen to me!! I could talk to you until I’m blue in the face, and you still don’t do as you’re told. You’re so lazy! If you don’t put your toys away, I’m going to take them away from you and give them to the neighbors. Can’t you ever listen? Look at me when I’m talking to you or I’ll smack you one.”

When you act like that you are just setting you and your child up for a bad day. Your yelling and threats confuse the child and make it harder for him to respond. Your telling him that he’s a bad kid who doesn’t do what he is told. Your his father and he’s going to believe you. A little kid isn’t going to understand you if you talk so much, little kids have just learned the language. If you talk too fast or tell them too many things at once, you lose them.

In talking to kids, keep it simple, you might say for example, “I don’t like it when you leave your toys out, pick them up please.”

Clear, simple messages work much better, speak slowly and distinctly. Don’t use words the child doesn’t know. Look the child in the eye to make sure that he’s listening.

An important quality of a good father is patience. It sometimes takes quite awhile to get through to a child.

Let’s take the example of the toys lying around all over the living room; what if you tell your child to pick them up and he doesn’t? What should you do?

It’s a good rule to give a child at least three chances to what he/she was told before you use discipline. Do you think that you have that much patience?

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## Communication Skills

Assignment:

1. Make a list of some of the things parents say to children that they shouldn't say. In the left-hand column, negative parental statements
2. See if you can think of what a parent should say instead. Write positive alternatives on the right-hand side of the sheet.
3. Remember: Children have rights too. You can't expect them to do what you want all the time. You have to go their way sometimes. You have, at least to let them have their say. Communication is a two-way street!

Negative Parental Statements	Positive Alternative

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## Communication: "I" Messages

When trying to tell someone, especially a child, that what they are doing is not viewed as good, it is important to avoid making them feel bad about themselves.

It is very important that a child recognize the difference between what they do and who they are. If a child is made to feel stupid, he will believe he is, and that he deserves to be treated as such.

Keeping this in mind, it is especially important that parents learn how to talk to children. Children (like anyone else) do things that upset people. Sometimes children get upset for things they can't understand. It is vital that parents learn to teach their children the difference. Parents also must understand that some problems are problems they must handle, while others problems are problems their children must handle.

Let's go over an example;

1. A child's room is a mess. Whose problem is it?

Well, it is probably not the child's problem because that is probably how he like his room. But, parents usually want neatness and order, and a messy room may bother them.

So what do you do? Tell your child how you feel and what impact his behavior has on you.

How do you do this?

Use "I" messages: An I message is a statement that contains three components.

- a. your feelings
- b. about the behavior
- c. and its potential impact on the child

For example, "I feel awful when I see your clothes on the floor, I feel like not buying you nice, new things."

Nowhere in this statement is there room for name calling, or accusations.

Never tell a child, "I'm angry because you are a pig/lazy/stupid.  
(name calling)

Or you're just doing this because you are lazy/hate me/ are stupid, etc.  
(accusations)

Remember, you are trying to teach a child that his behavior is bad, but he is good.

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## Communication

### Recognizing Roadblocks

#### Teacher Notes

The object is to teach students that how we speak to people either opens up communication or puts up roadblocks.

When we speak to people we send meanings behind our messages. If we ask a question or make a statement that sends a negative message, chances are we won't get a positive response.

The following are categories used to distinguish the meaning behind the message. Have students learn these categories then do the corresponding assignment.

1. Judging: to decide the worth of, or place a value on something; something is better than another.
2. Ordering: to demand; not giving the person a choice to behave. People who have the opportunity to choose usually choose the right way.
3. Moralizing: trying to point out what is wrong by attaching guilt feeling to the behavior; trying to make someone do something by making them feel guilty if they don't do it. For example, "eat all your food because there are people starving in the world."
4. Ridiculing: making fun of; making a person feel foolish.
5. Knowing-it-All, "Solving the problem": Solving the problem with a quick fix, regardless of what the other feels, thinks, or believes.

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#### KEY TO THE CORRESPONDING ASSIGNMENT

Category	Question Numbers
Judging	1, 3, 4
Ordering	2, 6, 10
Moralizing	9
Ridiculing	7, 8, 13
Know-it-All	5, 11, 12

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### Recognizing Roadblocks

#### Assignment

Listed below are perfect ways to stop all communication. These are ways to shut kids up or open them up and they are things we all do! What is wrong with these fifteen statements? How could they have been better stated? How do they stop communication?

Label each statement as: J=Judging, O=Ordering, M=Moralizing, R=Ridiculing, K=The Know-It-All (Solving the Problem)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Why can't you be like Billy? He never talks back to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Go to your room right now and don't come back until you can act your age.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. You probably don't like school because you're always getting in trouble.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Look what a good boy you are picking up all the toys.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. You only feel that way because your friends say it is the thing to do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. It is your duty to tell the truth - I can't help it if you are afraid.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who do you think you are?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Have you thought about talking it over with your counselor? Perhaps she will understand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When I was your age I never had the opportunities you have.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The next time I see you hitting your brother you'll get sent to your room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. You're just acting this way because you want attention.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Poor little baby . . you bump your finger . . come let me kiss it for you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Don't be silly Jimmy, of course I like you.

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## Communication

### HANDOUT

The two basic parts of effective communication are (1) sending clear messages; and (2) listening, listening, and LISTENING!

#### **Communication makes or breaks relationships.**

*Parent:* "You look a mess. Why don't you change before you leave?"

*Son or daughter:* "Because I don't want to. You don't look so good yourself."

#### **Trust occurs when verbal and nonverbal communication are the same.**

*Classmate:* "What's bugging you?"

*Second classmate (very depressed):* "Everything is peachy."

#### **Use I-messages to convey your feelings.**

*Girl:* "You should drive slower." *Boy:* "I like to drive fast."

#### **Be an active listener.**

*Parent is* reading a newspaper.

*Son or daughter:* "My friend got kicked out of school for fighting, and it wasn't his fault."

*Parent:* "Your friend shouldn't fight at school."

#### **Avoid hasty judgments and pre-thinking another person's thoughts.**

*Boyfriend:* "I'm going bowling with the boys tonight."

*Girlfriend:* "You don't love me any more. You always want to be with the boys."

#### **Listen to the speaker's message and accept his or her feelings.**

(This does not mean you approve or agree, only that you heard.)

*Parent:* "You should stop running around with those kids."

*Son or daughter:* "You never like any of my friends."

## COMMUNICATION (Continued)

### **Avoid hasty judgments and pre-thinking another person's thoughts.**

*Friend:* "You want to go to the show with us tonight?"

*Second friend:* "No, I can't."

*Friend:* "You never want to do anything with us anymore."

### **Listen for feeling and emotion.**

*Friend:* "I see we're doing it *your way*."

### **Know what he or she is talking about.**

*Boy:* "This is the way to change the tire."

*Friend:* "How do you know?"

### **Warmth and friendliness help the listener concentrate on the message.**

*Parent:* "You're sloppy. This room again looks like a mess."

*Second friend:* "What do you mean? We never do it my way."

*Son or daughter:* "It's my room, and I like it."

### **Pitch, tone, volume, and speed of words give messages.**

*Girl:* (Talking fast in excited voice.) "Bill asked me out."

*Friend:* "Big deal. Who would want to go with him?"

Students may make additional communication cards.

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## Door Openers and Door Slammers: Relating to Others

### Teacher's Notes

What people say to us and how they say it can influence the way we feel about ourselves. Also what we say to others affects how they feel. Interactions that are positive are door openers and can give a sense of well-being. Interactions that are negative are door slammers and can give a sense of insecurity and anxiety.

1. Have students discuss the lists of Door Openers and Door Slammers depicted below. Write the lists on the board or use an overhead projector.
2. Form the class into groups of four or five students each and ask each group to write an example for each opener and slammer. Example: Sister to younger sister Thank you for loaning me your necklace. It is on your dresser. You may borrow one of mine sometime."
3. Have each student keep a Door Openers/Slammers Record Sheet (see following page) listing the Door Openers and Door Slammers given and received in one week.
4. Have the students discuss what changes they would like to make in their relationships with others.

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## Communications

### HANDOUT

Definitions of:

#### I. Door Openers

- a. Praising - expressing approval.
- b. Sympathizing - sharing and/or understanding what the other person feels.
- c. Supporting - to give help, comfort, courage, approval, faith or confidence.
- d. Empathizing - feeling the other person's emotions, thoughts, and feelings.
- e. Reassuring - restoring the persons confidence; helping the person feel more safe or secure.
- f. Consoling - to make feel less sad or disappointed.
- g. Being sincere - being truthful, straightforward, genuine.
- h. Being attentive - paying attention, being considerate and courteous.
- i. Encouraging - to give courage, hope or confidence.

# FAMILY ISSUES

## COMMUNICATION

### HANDOUT

Definitions of:

#### II. Door Slammers

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| a. <u>Ridicule</u> -            | to make fun of.   |
| b. <u>Ignoring</u> -            | to pay no attention to.   |
| c. <u>Blaming</u> -             | to place responsibility or fault on the person.                             |
| d. <u>Discouraging</u> -        | to take away hope, confidence; to prevent communication by disapproval.     |
| e. <u>Doubting</u> -            | not trusting; to disbelieve; to be uncertain about what is being said.      |
| f. <u>Being insincere</u> -     | to be sarcastic, not to be trusted, being not genuine or real.              |
| g. <u>Being distracted</u> -    | not paying full attention to what is being said; not listening well.        |
| h. <u>Dismissing feelings</u> - | ignoring the feelings of another, not taking the persons feeling seriously. |

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### EMOTIONS LIST

Some people have a hard time saying what emotions they have. They can only say that they feel "Good", "Bad", or "Upset". Here is a list of many different emotions to help you talk about yours.

ABANDONED	DIFFERENT	INFURIATED	RELIEVED
ADEQUATE	DISCONTENT	INTIMIDATED	REMORSEFUL
AFFECTIONATE	DISTURBED	ISOLATED	RESTLESS
ANGRY	DIVIDED	JEALOUS	RIGHTEOUS
ANNOYED	DOUBTFUL	JUMPY	SATISFIED
ANXIOUS	ECSTATIC	KIND	SCARED
APATHETIC	EMPTY	LAZY	SHOCKED
ARROGANT	ENCHANTED	LEFT OUT	SKEPTICAL
ASHAMED	ENERGETIC	LONELY	SMUG
ASTOUNDED	ENVIOUS	LONGING	SNEAKY
AWED	EVIL	LOST	SORROWFUL
BEAUTIFUL	EXCITED	LOVED	STARTLED
BETRAYED	EXHAUSTED	LOVING	STINGY
BEWILDERED	FEARFUL	MEAN	STUNNED
BITTER	FLUSTERED	MELANCHOLY	SUFFERING
BOLD	FOOLISH	MISERABLE	TEMPTED
BORED	FRANTIC	MYSTIFIED	TENSE
BRAVE	FREE	NAUGHTY	THREATENED
BURDENED	FRIENDLY	NEGLECTED	TIRED
CALM	FRIGHTENED	NERVOUS	TRAPPED
CAPABLE	FRUSTRATED	NICE	TROUBLED
CHALLENGED	FULL	OBNOXIOUS	UGLY
CHEATED	FURIOUS	OBSESSED	UNEASY
CHEERFUL	GLAD	ODD	UNSETTLED
CHILDISH	GRATIFIED	OUTRAGED	WEEPY
CLEVER	GREEDY	OVERWHELMED	WICKED
COMBATIVE	GUILTY	PAINED	WONDERFUL
COMPETITIVE	HAPPY	PANICKED	WORRIED
CONFUSED	HATEFUL	PARANOID	
CONTENTED	HELPFUL	PEACEFUL	
CONTRITE	HELPLESS	PLEASED	
CRUEL	HIGH	PRESSURED	
CRUSHED	HOMESICK	PROUD	
DEFEATED	HORRIFIED	QUARRELSOME	
DELIGHTED	HURT	RAGING	
DESTRUCTIVE	HYSTERICAL	REJECTED	
DETERMINED	IMPRESSED	RELAXED	